AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

CLAIM 1 (canceled)

CLAIM 2 (currently amended):

2. ~~The method of Claim 1,~~ A method of delivering a plurality of data messages to a customer at a customer station, comprising the steps of:

if the customer station is idle, delivering a message directly to the customer station:

if the customer station is busy receiving another message, determining a precedence level for a received message, and storing the received message in storage associated with that precedence level;

if the customer station is busy receiving said another message, notifying the customer that said message is being received by a system for storing received messages:

if said customer, responsive to said notifying, signals for immediate delivery of said message to said customer station, immediately delivering said message to said customer station;

subsequently, when the customer station is idle, delivering messages to the customer station from storage of higher precedence level before delivering messages from storage of lower precedence level;

wherein certain classes of messages also have a preemption level, wherein if said customer station receives a message with a preemption level, the reception of said another message is interrupted if the precedence level of the received message is above a precedence level of said another message currently being received by the customer, unless the customer, responsive to said notifying, signals for a deferral of delivery of said message.

CLAIMS 3-7 (canceled)

CLAIM 8 (currently amended):

8. ~~The apparatus of Claim 7,~~ Apparatus for delivering a plurality of data messages to a customer station, comprising:

means, responsive to recognizing that the customer station is idle, for delivering a message directly to the customer station:

means, responsive to recognizing that the customer station is busy receiving another message, for determining a precedence level for a received message, and for storing the received message in storage associated with that precedence level;

means, responsive to recognizing that the customer station is busy receiving said another message, for notifying a customer at said customer station that said message is being received by a system for storing received messages;

said customer, responsive to said notifying, operating signaling means for requesting immediate delivery of said message to said customer station;

means for, subsequently, when the customer is idle, delivering messages to the customer station from storage of higher precedence level before delivering messages from storage of lower precedence level;

wherein certain classes of messages also have a preemption level, wherein if said customer station receives a message with a preemption level, the reception of said another message is interrupted by said ~~mean~~ means for delivering messages if the precedence level of the received message is above a precedence level of said another message currently being received by the customer station, unless the customer, responsive to said notifying, signals for a deferral of delivery of said message.

CLAIMS 9-12 (canceled)